COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SOCIAL SKILLS IN SIGHTED AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

Socialization is the process by which individuals get the knowledge, skills, attitudes and socially acceptable behaviours.Social skills are the behaviours that promote positive interaction with others and the environment of an individual.Social skills play a critical role in the educational process of a person especially in the case of students with Visual Impairment.Students with visual impairment tend to differ in their socialization as compared to the normal sighted students due to lack in visual cues and incidental learning. A number of studies demonstrated that visually impaired adolescents face various problems in social relations comparing to their peers with no impairment.

In this study we are aiming to analyse the differences in social skills of Sightedand Visually Impaired adolescents, both boys and girls of 13-15 years of age. The data were collected from 745 Sighted students from 15 schools and 55 Visually Impaired students from 4 Blind schools, participated willingly in the study. As a data collection tool researcher made 3-point Social Skill Self Report Assessment Checklist (SSSRAC), which includes 27 social skills, was applied. For comparison Mean, S.D. and t-test was used to test significance of the difference between means of Sighted and VI students to identify the social skill deficits in VI students. As a result of the comparison it was found that the Visually Impaired students have deficits in 11 social skills.The findings of this research are evaluated in the light of relevant literature.

KEYWORDS: Social skills, Visually impaired adolescents, Comparison, Social Skills Deficits.

Introduction
Background
Socialization is the ability to interact well with other members of the society,and it deals with learning and implementing appropriate social skills. Social skills are the behaviours exhibited in social situations that enable the child to interact effectively with others to avoid socially unacceptable responses (Gresham, 1988). The development of social skills lays a critical foundation for academic achievement as well as work related skills (McClelland & Morrison, 2003).Heiman, &Margalit (1998), stated that good social skills make people enable to cooperate, control their behaviour and understand other people's needs and desires while low social skills causes difficulty in initiating and maintaining contact with other people that leads to psychological problems (Segrin, 2000).

There are some researches attempted to study socialization in visually impaired students and found that these children are considerably lacking skills related to social interactions (Movahedi A., et.al. 2011). The process of socialization is deeply affected by skills of daily living and it was found that visually impaired children had fewer interaction with friends and rejected by sighted peers that leads to social isolation (Jones & Chiba, 1985). Adolescents with visual impairment seem to be socially more isolated, to have few friends and small social networks, lack adequate social support (Anderson E.M. et al., 1982).Youths who lack social competence have been at risk for many difficulties including aggression, rejection, academic failure, loneliness, mental illness and maintaining relations with others (Parker & Asher, 1987).

To promote positive social interaction and further inclusion, children with visual impairment need to develop their social skills through a variety of experiences. During adolescents the interpersonal interactions and behaviours necessary for successful socialization become increasingly complex. The identification and treatment of socially deficient children can reduce the short or long term negative consequences and help in social inclusion of a child. This leads to consider the differences in socialization in normal and visually impaired students and to determine their social skills deficits.

Theoretical foundation
The research was guided by Social learning theory by Bandura Albert, (1977). In his theory it is explained that people learn new behavior through overt reinforcement or punishment, or via observational learning of the social factors in their environment. Similarly through his Socio-cultural theory, Vygotsky (1995) introduced the core concepts of the "primary disability, "secondary disability" and their interactions. A "primary" disability is an organic impairment due to biological factors. A "secondary" disability refers to distortions of higher psychological functions due to social factors. An organic impairment prevents a child from mastering some or most social skills and acquiring knowledge at a proper rate and in an acceptable form. He stated, if the path of development diverges from normal social development because of the child's disability, then the child is socially deprived. This leads to the emergence of delays and deficiencies, i.e. secondary handicapping conditions and inadequate compensatory ways of coping. According to Behaviourists children's social behaviours are not a consequence of innate traits but they are learned from the environment and others, and can be changed positively or negatively by reinforcement, (Sacks &Wolffe, 2006).Also, physical disability like visual impairment affects the social functioning of a child as compared through the normal ones. Children'ssocial skills predict important outcomes, such as peer acceptance, friendships, and positive opinion by significant others (Nassau &Drotar, 1995). Social deficits in children with visual impairment are typically caused by a lack of information about the visual aspects of interacting with others(TorrenoStephani,2012).Thus it is clear that socially deprived child develop delays and deficiencies and disability is sensitive to remediation and social influences.

Material and Method
Research design
As this study aims to find out social skills deficits in visually impaired adolescents as compared to sighted adolescents, a descriptive research design was used to conduct survey and quantitative research technique was applied.

Sample
The study was conducted in academic year 2014-15, on 745 sighted students (313 female, 432 male) and 55 Visually Impaired students (31 female, 24 male), from the schools in Pune city, Maharashtra, India. The details are as follows –

1. Sampling design and Sample for Sighted students
School sample:
To obtain the sample to undertake survey on the Sighted students following technique was used to have a truly representative sample. Geographical area under Pune city within the limits of Pune Municipal Corporation was divided into 5 zones considering PIN codes as – Central Pune, North-West Pune, North-East Pune, West-South Pune and South-East Pune, to select schools from each zone.

List of Approved Schools under Pune Municipal Corporation was obtained. Using PIN codes the schools are divided as per the five zones in the Pune city. The criteria for selection of the school was – Approved, Co-education, English medium schools under Pune Municipal Corporation. Thus the zone-wise list of schools meeting the selection criteria was obtained. From each zone three schools (Approx. 20%) were selected randomly using lottery method. Thus total 15 schools were selected from all the five zones in Pune city, Maharashtra, India.

Student sample:
After selection of schools, from each school students from one class were selected using incidental sampling. The sample characteristic are as follows –

•   Sighted Students

- Studying in English medium
- 13-15 years of age
- Boys and girls – Co-education

Thus, 745 Sighted students had participated in the survey.

2. Sampling design and Sample for Visually Impaired students
School sample:
Purposive sampling was used for the selection of schools. There are four schools for the Visually impaired students in Pune. All the 4 schools (100%) were selected for the survey.

Student sample:
55 visually impaired students had participated in the survey. The sample characteristics are as follows –

- Visually impaired students
- 13-15 years of age
- Boys and girls

Plan& Procedure of the research
Research question
What is the difference in social skills of Sighted and Visually Impaired adolescents?

Objectives of the study
1. To prepare Social skill Self- Report Assessment Checklist (SSSARC) to assess social skills of Sighted and Visually Impaired adolescents

2. To assess the social skills in Sighted adolescents

3. To assess the social skills in Visually Impaired adolescents

4. To compare social skills of Sighted and Visually Impaired adolescents to identify skill deficits in VI students

Procedure
Plan & Procedure for Objective 1:
Development of Social Skills Self-Assessment Rating Checklist (SSSARC)

Measuring social skills:
There are number of complexities in the conceptualization of social skills that lead to difficulties for assessment. Greenspan and Granfield (1992) recognize that there are significant obstacles to measure social intelligence. McGrew et al. (1996) stated that irrespective of many efforts to operationalize the measurement of the social intelligence construct, none to date has produced a practically useful assessment tool similar in psychometric stature to current collection of standardized measures of intelligence and adaptive behaviour.

A standard battery of tests or methods for assessing social skills does not exist (Elliot S., Sheridan S. & Gresham F., 1989). It was observed that though many ready made tools are available, each of them considered various components of social skills. As the skills in the available ready made tools were not matching to the skills considered in the present study, the checklist was constructed to measure the social skills of adolescents.

Following steps were followed in development of the tool -
1. Rationale for using checklist
2. Focus
3. Classification and Identifying Indicators
4. Writing statements
5.Initial review
6. Evaluation by experts
7. Pilot study
8. Finalization
9. Translation in local language – Marathi for VI students.

Nature of the tool- SSSARC
It is an Inquiry form of tool, with the purpose of screening the Sighted as well as VI students for the presence or absence of the social skills. The checklist is constructed for finding out the social skill deficits in VI students as compared to the Sighted students. It is a self- assessment checklist that measures how often the skill is used by the students. The researcher have identified 27 specific social skills grouped into 4 skill clusters as shown in the Table 1

SSSARC is 140-item measure of social skills consists of 4 social skill sets that include 27 specific social skills, for students (Sighted as well as Visually Impaired) of age 13-15 years. It is self-report rating checklist rated on 3-point scale. Here the scale values are provided to the responses. In this rating checklist the item responses indicate only an ordered structure and not a numerical value in a mathematical sense. Thus the checklist is rated on a 3-point scale ranging from '0' (Almost never) to '2' (Almost always). A total social skill checklist score is computed with a range of Minimum- 0 to Maximum-280. Higher scores indicate better social skills and lower scores indicate social skills deficits. Description of

the scale is as follows:

Almost always: the student consistently displays this skill in many occasions

Sometimes: the student display this skill on a few occasions

Almost never: the student rarely or never exhibits this skill in daily life

The final tool was used for data collection through survey of Sighted and Visually Impaired students in Pune city, Maharashtra, India.

Procedure for data collection
For Sighted students:
The SSSARC was thus responded by 745 sighted students. The researcher collected data by personally visiting the schools. A prior consent and permission was taken from the respective school principals before actual data collection. At the time of administering the tool, the students were briefed about the purpose of the survey. Also, detail instructions about method to respond to each item was explained before the actual implementation of the tool. The doubts or queries were cleared and thus data were collected.

For Visually Impaired students:
Training: Prior to actual data collection training for writers for VI students was conducted. The training session was organized with the purpose of providing information about the purpose of survey and the details of the tool SSSARC used for survey. The researcher herself conducted the training program that included presentation about the data collection tool followed by question- answer session. Researcher explained the meaning of each item, process of collecting data and how to fill-up the information. The doubts were cleared during the question-answer session. The writers included girls and boys who have completed their Post -Graduation.

Tool implementation: The tool was administered by the researcher along with the team of trained writers. The data was collected by personally visiting the schools. A prior consent and permission was taken before data collection by the respective school authorities. The students were briefed about the purpose of survey and way of responding to the items. The responses were recorded by respective writers.

The data thus collected from sighted as well as VI students were analysed, and compared to identify social skills deficits.

Analysis
SPSS version 16.00was used to analyse the data obtained. Before determining main statistical tests the data were subjected to the Normality testing,the data were found to be normal for both the samples hence parametric tests were used for further analysis.

Statistical tools used:
Mean, S.D. and t-test was used for testing significance of the difference between means of Sighted and VI students to identify the social skill deficits in VI students.

Results
The results of comparison of social skills of sighted and visually impaired students for identifying deficits that show significant difference between meansare presented in the Table 2. It was observed that out of 25 skills the 15 skills show less mean scores than that of sighted students. In rest of the skills VI students show higher scores than sighted student. Hence to identify skill deficits only 15 skills were considered as follows -

Null hypothesis
There is no significant difference between means of Social Skills scores of Sighted and VI students.

The data is analysed using t-test, following table-2 shows summary of obtained t-values and table t-values.

Observation: Since the obtained t-value is greater than table t-value at 0.01 level, in 11 skill deficits the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. Similarly since the obtained t-value is smaller than table t-value at 0.01 level, in 4 skill deficits the null hypothesis is acceptedand alternative hypothesis is rejected

Interpretation: The above observation reveals that there is significant difference between means of Social Skills Scores between sighted students and VI students and these deficits are - Expressing feelings, Appropriate body language, Taking initiative, Coordinating, Persuading, Participating, Maintaining self-control, Defence of own rights, Managing emotions, Accepting differences and Being confident. Thus if we consider cluster-wise, it was found that visually impaired students are lacking majorly in some of the Communication & Interpersonal Skills, Assertiveness & Conflict resolution skills and Cooperation & teamwork skills.

Thus it can be concluded that visually impaired adolescents lack in some social skills as compared to the sighted adolescents.

Discussion

In this study it is concluded that visually impaired students are having social skill deficits majorly in Communication & Interpersonal Skills, Assertiveness & Conflict resolution skills and Cooperation & teamwork skills. When considered the results of this study in the light of available relevant literature it is seen that similar results are achieved by the researchers working in the field of social skills development. As sited in the research paper of Beaty L.A.,1992, using Bell Adjustment Inventory, Brieland (1950), found that visually impaired adolescents were more likely to demonstrate social adjustment problems than sighted peers. This result is similar to the results obtained in the present study.

According to studies conducted by Sacks &Wollfe, 2006, children with Visual impairment face the problems of ignorance by their peers because they show no cooperation and turn taking with others. Similar to this, in the present study it was found that VI students are also lacking in some of the cooperation & teamwork skills.

In the present study it was found that students with Visual impairment are having interpersonal communication skill deficits which is supported by the research study conducted by Jindal – Snape, 2005, stated that because of absence of visual cues blind people constrains their interpersonal communication.

In a project called Social Network Pilot Project (SNPP), U.S., it was found that students with visual impairment appeared to be involved in the fewest social activities and least likely to be in social situations that involved lots of other people as compared to the sighted students. In the present study visually impaired students are also found to be low in social interaction and interpersonal communication

According to the study carried out by Caballo, C. &Verdugo, M.A.(2007), social skills of children and adolescents with visual impairment include the promotion of relevant skills for all children in order to prevent deficits, to improve quality of social relationships and avoid social isolation, which resembles with the present study findings.

In a study conducted by Mishra V. & Singh A.,2012, it was found that sighted students have high self-confidence than the visually impaired students, supports the findings of the present study.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to identify social skill differences in Sighted and Visually Impaired adolescents of age 13-15 years. A tool Social Skills Self-Assessment Rating Checklist (SSSARC) was developed to assess social skills of the adolescents. A survey was conducted to assess social skills of Sighted and VI students. After comparing their social skills it was found that the VI students are having deficits in the social skills - Expressing feelings, Appropriate body language, Taking initiative, Coordinating, Persuading, Participating, Maintaining self-control, Defence of own rights, Managing emotions, Accepting differences and Being confident.

Limitations

This study was limited to sighted students between age group 13-15 years studying in English medium schools in Pune city and Visually Impaired students of the same age group from the four Blind schools in Pune city. The social skills were assessed using researcher made tool - Social Skills Self-Assessment Rating Checklist (SSSARC).

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, it can be recommended that the social skills deficits in visually impaired adolescents should be assessed and social skill development training can be provided to improve socialization of these students to provide more positive social environment and successful inclusion.

Table – 1 Identified Social skills	
Social Skill Cluster	**Specific Social Skills**
Communication & Interpersonal skills	• Listening carefully • Speaking clearly • Expressing feelings • Appropriate body language • Taking initiative • Being polite • Developing friendships
Cooperation & Teamwork skills	• Being active in a group • Helping others • Following the rules • Understanding common goals • Encouraging others • Coordinating • Persuading • Participating
Assertiveness & Conflict resolution skills	• Being open • Maintaining self-control • Defense of own rights • Empathy • Managing emotions • Accepting differences • Compromise and negotiate • Being confident
Problem solving & Decision making skills	• Defining a problem • Identifying consequences • Generating potential solutions • Selecting best alternative

Table – 2
Skill deficits in VI students

S.N.	Social Skill	Sample	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Table t-value at 0.01 level	Degree of freedom	Mean difference
1	LC	Sighted Students	745	10.2456	1.84042	0.245	2.58	798	Not significant
		VI Students	55	10.1818	2.14382				
2	EF	Sighted Students	745	6.0752	1.81236	5.036	2.58	798	Significant
		VI Students	55	4.8	1.80944				
3	ABL	Sighted Students	745	8.4255	1.88732	6.601	2.58	798	Significant
		VI Students	55	6.6727	2.07324				
4	TI	Sighted Students	745	6.9624	1.56273	3.758	2.58	798	Significant
		VI Students	55	6.1455	1.45829				
5	BP	Sighted Students	745	9.7544	2.09006	2.117	2.58	798	Not significant
		VI Students	55	9.1455	1.55657				
6	IC	Sighted Students	745	6.0027	1.43684	1.84	2.58	798	Not significant
		VI Students	55	5.6364	1.25261				
7	CO	Sighted Students	745	5.9772	1.49489	6.372	2.58	798	Significant
		VI Students	55	4.6545	1.35015				
8	PER	Sighted Students	745	6.1396	1.38613	6.885	2.58	798	Significant
		VI Students	55	4.8182	1.18776				
9	PAR	Sighted Students	745	6.3799	1.47902	5.809	2.58	798	Significant
		VI Students	55	5.2	1.0435				
10	MSC	Sighted Students	745	7.149	1.92761	2.753	2.58	798	Significant
		VI Students	55	6.4182	1.46175				
11	DOR	Sighted Students	745	7.6577	1.66951	6.277	2.58	798	Significant
		VI Students	55	6.2	1.55635				
12	EMP	Sighted Students	745	5.996	1.52708	0.154	2.58	798	Not significant
		VI Students	55	5.9636	1.18577				
13	ME	Sighted Students	745	5.9463	1.51598	4.914	2.58	798	Significant
		VI Students	55	4.9273	0.93995				
14	AD	Sighted Students	745	4.8121	1.67913	2.823	2.58	798	Significant
		VI Students	55	4.1455	1.82998				
15	BC	Sighted Students	745	8.4456	1.66642	5.895	2.58	798	Significant
		VI Students	55	7.0909	1.30912				

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